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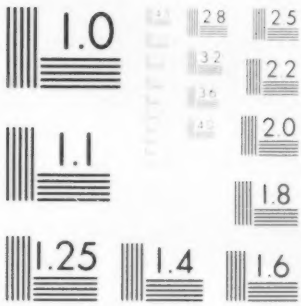

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 808 UD 018 465

AUTHOR Howell, Gladys David
TITLE Religious Values and the Emancipation of Women: An Ethnic Case Study.
PUB DATE [78]
NOTE 27p.; Tables 1-6 may not reproduce well due to reproduction quality of the original document

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Acculturation; Adjustment (to Environment); *Catholics; Cultural Differences; Ethnic Groups; *Immigrants; *Protestants; Religious Cultural Groups; *Religious Differences; *Values
IDENTIFIERS Syria; *Syrian Americans

ABSTRACT

Differences in acculturation patterns among Protestant and Catholic (Orthodox) Syrians in a city in the southern United States are examined in this paper. Theoretical perspectives on religious/cultural group assimilation are reviewed and the methodology of the current study is outlined. The history of Protestantism in traditionally Catholic Syria is sketched briefly. Immigration of Syrians to America in the late 19th century, and the social and economic activities pursued by this group, are described. It is found that the immigrants, similar in all respects except religion, displayed varying patterns of assimilation, the Protestants in general assimilating more rapidly. The difference is most clearly expressed in the behavior of second generation daughters of immigrants. It is concluded that the Protestant value system served as a catalyst to autonomy, educational attainment, and willingness to leave the protectiveness of the ethnic community. (Author/GC)

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RELIGIOUS VALUES AND THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN:

An Ethnic Case Study

Gladys David Howell

Associate Professor of Sociology

East Carolina University

Greenville, North Carolina

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UD018465

JUL 17 1978

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Abstract

American-born daughters of Middle Eastern immigrants to a southern port city of the United States differed in patterns of educational attainment, intermarriage with members of the dominant group, and mobility out of the city, on the basis of religious affiliation. Among the Middle Eastern Christian immigrants of the parental generation were families from a Syrian town, some of whom had converted to Protestantism while others remained in the Syrian Orthodox faith. These immigrants, similar in all respects except religion, displayed varying patterns of assimilation, the Protestants in general assimilating more readily. The difference is most clearly expressed in the behavior of second generation daughters. There is clear indication that the Protestant value system served as a catalyst to autonomy, educational attainment, and willingness to leave the protectiveness of the ethnic community.

RELIGIOUS VALUES AND THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN:
An Ethnic Case Study

INTRODUCTION

Within the heterogeneous mosaic of American society there are many ethnic minority groups who have received relatively little attention from scholars. Those who arrived with the "new migration" of the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century present interesting contrasts to the descendants of earlier migrations and, in some ways, provide tests for hypotheses which have evolved from the study of other groups.

This paper focuses on a group of immigrants from Syria who settled in a port city of the South and adapted to American society early in this century. In terms of the role of women and the interrelationship between ethnicity and values favoring liberation and self-development, the group in question presents some remarkable evidence and bases for comparison. The traditional subordination of women in Middle Eastern society was never more clearly highlighted than during President Carter's visit to Saudi Arabia during the first week in January, 1978. The news media made much of the separate dinner arrangements made for Mrs. Carter as the result of the "for men only" protocol of the official ceremonies. In the adaptation to American culture the

Syrian families who had been touched by Protestant missionary efforts in their homeland showed markedly different patterns in rearing their daughters from those families who had adhered to the Catholic faith, the former more readily accepting higher education and out-marriage than the latter.

The subject group of this paper was Christian inhabitants of a small Syrian town some fifty miles from Damascus, who came either directly or indirectly under the influence of Presbyterian missionaries prior to emigrating to a southern port city of the United States. A central purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the missionary contact was an invaluable agent of acculturation or anticipatory socialization for the migrants and that skills and values learned through the mission schools were functional in the assimilation process in the adopted host culture. Further, it is hypothesized that this influence continued in the adaptations of the second generation (i.e., American-born progeny of the original migrants) as an important determinant of behavior related to acculturation and assimilation, with Protestants evidencing greater assimilation than their Catholic counterparts. Further, it is hypothesized that the values in question offered the basis of greater opportunity for the female members of the subject group.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

American society has been a laboratory for the study of intergroup relations because of its peculiar history.

Embracing as it does various races, a multiplicity of ethnic groups, and pluralistic religious groups and all having come into contact and having made various adaptations within a relatively short period of time, this complex social order has understandably generated a variety of theoretical perspectives on the processes involved and the most desirable consequences to be achieved. An early American formulation (Park) assumed a sequential pattern beginning with contact and culminating in the complete fusion of minority with host, usually by way of supplanting the native minority sentiment and behavior with those of the dominant group. Also writing in the early years of the twentieth century, an American playwright (Zangwill) coined the term "melting pot" to describe a process which he exuberantly perceived to be the continuous blending of diverse cultural elements in the crucible of American social life, leading to a new vigorous hybrid. This view presents the assimilation process as a dynamic exchange between minority and dominant groups rather than a one-sided Anglo-conformity exacted of minority members. Still a third point of view came from the same time frame when an intellectual student of American democracy (Kallen) set forth the ideal of a "federation of nations" where each ethnic group would retain its distinctive cultural attributes and sense of worth. The cultural pluralism emphasis was reactivated by the black

power spokesmen of the 1960's (Carmichael and Hamilton), and continues as a presently expressed goal for many minorities.

While the assimilationist perspective, often expressed as melting pot but more often perceived as Anglo-conformity, has continued to be the major frame of reference for the analysis of dominant-minority interaction patterns and their consequences, considerable refinement has occurred as empirical studies have accumulated. The old assumption of a single melting pot inevitably progressing toward the social acceptance, intermarriage and fading identifiability of the minority members has been modified. A study of intermarriage patterns in a northeastern city led to the concept of the triple melting pot, indicating that assimilation processes are contained within broad religious categories (Kennedy). A mid-century comparison of five minority groups revealed differing rates of assimilation, with severe barriers experienced by those groups with past histories of extreme categorial discrimination facilitated by racial visibility (Glazer and Moynihan).

Still a later attempt at clarification of dominant-minority group patterns involved the elaboration of the assimilation process on the basis of seven aspects or variables (Gordon): cultural assimilation or acculturation, structural assimilation, marital assimilation or amalgamation, identificational assimilation, attitude receptional

assimilation, behavioral receptional assimilation, and civic assimilation. This breakdown of the concept of assimilation into component variables provides a useful framework for comparing and contrasting the actual adaptive patterns of various minority groups.

The present study demonstrates how the assimilation process can vary for members of a single ethnic group on the basis of one crucial variable, the religious factor.

DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGY

For purposes of this study the term acculturation is used in the sense of Gordon's cultural assimilation. This refers to the process by which members of a minority group take on the overt behavior as well as the values, sentiments and beliefs of the dominant host group. Assimilation for purposes of this paper refers to the process by which members of a minority group gain acceptance as members in a variety of primary and secondary groups of the dominant host society, Gordon's structural assimilation, and ultimately intermarry outside the boundaries of the ethnic community, Gordon's marital assimilation or amalgamation.

The subjects of the study fall into two categories: Syrian-born immigrants who came to a southern port city of the United States and their American-born offspring. The methodology is divided along these generational lines. Data concerning the early adjustment patterns of the original

immigrants has been available from various sources. Taped interviews with the oldest survivors have been systematically accumulated over the past year. Two written autobiographies of immigrants have been available and a published paper presented to a historical society in 1954 by one of the immigrants has been utilized. As an American-born member of the ethnic community the author has had a lifetime of observation and knowledge on which to draw. Findings related to this first generation of the group have been more impressionistic than statistical.

As to the second generation, all members born to the original immigrants have been taken into account. These cases comprise 79 individuals, 44 Catholics and 35 Protestants. Within the Catholic group, 24 were males and 20 were females; within the Protestant group, 16 were males and 19 were females. Data presented is not based on a sample but on a complete tabulation of frequencies for the second generation.

The data have been tabulated by male and female, Catholic and Protestant categories on several variables. The first variable relates to pursuit of higher education by the respective religious groups as an indication of an acceptance of the high value Americans place on this attainment. Further, any difference between second generation male and female members in each religious grouping has been taken to reflect the American emphasis on equality of the sexes as opposed to the traditional Middle Eastern pattern

of subordinate roles for women. Thus, completion of high school only as opposed to completion of college and/or professional training has been used as a dependent variable.

A second variable relates to marriage outside the ethnic community as opposed to marriage within. Marriage patterns bear a direct relationship to assimilation. Endogamy has generally been taken to reflect an emphasis on cultural pluralism while intermarriage, especially with dominant group members, has been taken as an indication that the melting pot is at work.

Finally, it has been assumed that geographic mobility out of the community would reflect a receptivity to assimilation. Accordingly, a comparison has been made along the lines of religion and sex of those who remained in the adopted community as opposed to those who left.

Nine hypotheses have been set forth for testing in this segment of the study.

Hypothesis I: Among the American-born offspring of the subject Syrian immigrant group, a significantly higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics will have completed college and/or professional training.

Hypothesis II: Among the American-born male offspring of the subject Syrian immigrant group, a significantly higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics will have completed college and/or professional training.

Hypothesis III: Among the American-born female offspring of the subject Syrian immigrant group, a significantly higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics will have completed college and/or professional training.

Hypothesis IV: Among the American-born offspring of the subject Syrian immigrant group a significantly higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics will have married outside the group.

Hypothesis V: Among the American-born male offspring of the subject Syrian immigrant group a significantly higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics will have married outside the group.

Hypothesis VI: Among the American-born female offspring of the subject Syrian immigrant group a significantly higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics will have married outside the group.

Hypothesis VII: Among the American-born offspring of the subject Syrian immigrant group a significantly higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics will have moved out of the local community.

Hypothesis VIII: Among the American-born male offspring of the subject Syrian immigrant group a significantly higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics will have moved out of the local community.

Hypothesis IX: Among the American-born female offspring of the subject Syrian immigrant group a significantly higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics will have moved out of the local community.

For each of these hypotheses a difference of proportions test has been applied in order to ascertain whether or not the differences are significant at the .05 level. While this test is generally applied to samples, it is valid for testing an entire universe, being even more meaningful in the latter case.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND--THE OLD COUNTRY

The subject group originally lived in a small town in the eastern part of Syria, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire. In this region Moslems constituted 90% of the society, the remaining 10% being Syrian Orthodox Catholics. The Turkish government provided no public schools in the small villages, even for Moslems, with education for the Christian segment left to local priests prior to the missionary effort.

Missionaries came to the Middle East in 1820 and remained well into the twentieth century. Finding the Moslem field barren, they turned their attention to the Orthodox Catholic groups. They felt it their mission to bring light where there was darkness, and that light involved first-hand familiarity with the Scriptures. This necessitated schools to produce a literate group of adherents.

American Presbyterians began opening segregated schools for boys and girls in the Beirut area as early as 1830. By the second half of the nineteenth century boarding schools had been established throughout Syria and a network of local village day schools had been developed. The curriculum of the boarding schools invariably included English as well as religious instruction. In 1865 the Syrian Protestant College (now the American University of Beirut) officially opened in Beirut, further providing a gateway to acculturation and assimilation to young men, and later women, formerly locked in the traditional folk culture of the Middle East.

The boarding schools were a means of training a cadre of Protestant converts who would return to the villages of their origin to continue the work of teaching and converting. In time there was a native-born teacher in many villages who could impart training in the basics of education to day school children. The most promising graduates of these schools would then enter the boarding schools in the larger centers.

One unintended consequence of training in English was its utility for those who wanted to emigrate to America. Further, students received basic skills such as arithmetic, other languages, manual skills, and in the college, theology and medicine. Women also partook of educational advantage, with advanced training available in nursing and midwifery.

Missionaries also imparted a value system which was in many ways antithetical to the traditional village perspective. Protestantism presented a direct attack on the authority of the Catholic Church and undermined the integrity of village life in subtle ways.

It is useful to compare and contrast the values of the indigenous Syrian Catholic culture with those of the Protestant missionaries. Both were negative to Turkish rule and Moslem domination. Both stressed the sanctity of the family and the importance of religion. Both stressed hard work and thrift as personal virtues, along with personal integrity and loyalty. There were, however, important differences. Where the traditional Syrian folk community was based on superordination and subordination in role definition, Protestants brought emphasis on autonomy and equality. This expressed itself in various relationships, such as unquestioning respect to the village priest versus salvation through one's own faith. Further, missionary women, wives, and workers, represented a highly emancipated womanhood when compared with the local village female's ascribed role. Individualism as a value was opened to both men and women as educational attainment became available. The Western emphasis on science and medicine supplanted folk medicine and superstition. The missionary movement was a spearhead for change as opposed to the resistance to change typical of traditional societies.

The success of the missionary activity resulted in divisions within families, problems of loyalty, and different modes of behavior for Catholic and Protestant Syrians, both in Syria and then later in the adoptive environment.

FIRST GENERATION ADJUSTMENT TO THE NEW COUNTRY

During the last decade of the nineteenth century the "new migration" was cresting. Several young men from the subject village came to a thriving commercial southern port city and began the establishment of a Syrian community. Coming from a small town where Christians formed a ten per cent minority and where religious endogamy had been typical, many of these newcomers were relatives. Some, however, were Catholic while others had converted to Protestantism. Although there was a great deal of mutual aid in the initial adjustment, the patterns of coming to terms with the host community in later decades presented some interesting contrasts. These contrasts expressed themselves subsequently in the lives of the progeny of the original immigrants.

The pioneer migrants were young adult males. In the course of time, they returned to Syria to visit family, marry and then return, or in some cases to bring wives and children who had been left behind. The birth of a second generation began in the first decade of the twentieth century. The stream of newcomers in the original pattern, however, continued in diminishing degree, as young men made

the crossing, got established in business, and then returned to Syria to marry and come back to America, right on through the 1930's. Fertility patterns were generally high.

There are nine family clans represented in the subject group, most being related in various ways. They now form a segment of a much larger Middle Eastern community that has been a vital part of the economy and community life of the host city throughout the twentieth century. Of the original migrants there were often siblings of different denominational membership. All took their religion seriously. The Protestants joined a large downtown Presbyterian church. The Catholics gravitated to Roman Catholicism. In later years when a Syrian priest joined the community he affiliated with Rome.

At the economic level all of the breadwinners had to adapt to the new environment and become sufficiently acculturated and assimilated to earn a living. There would seem to be no significant difference between Catholic and Protestant in this sphere. Most of the earliest started out as peddlars, progressed to a small grocery or sundries store and went on from there into various business enterprises. Later arrivals began a small retail business or entered a relative's enterprise. One datum, however, reflects the difference being suggested. After migrating, one boarding school-educated Protestant optimistically bought a set of law books from a salesman, hoping to pass

the bar examination and go into practice, as could be done at that time. His eighteen-hour work day precluded achievement of his goal, but a younger brother, also Protestant, who immigrated a few years later was encouraged to read the law while being supported by the older brother; the sibling was admitted to the state bar in 1916. While most Syrian men of the first generation have been economically successful and self-sufficient, this stemming to some extent from the general value on thrift and hard work, as well as the ancient trade traditions of the Middle East, this early willingness to look toward different lines of economic endeavor may well be related to the newly acquired emphasis on change, autonomy and individualism.

As to the wives, some of whom had received educational advantages from mission schools, there were built-in protections against the outer society for those who stayed home with children. Nonetheless, taped interviews reveal a number of cases of women who, knowing no English, arrived in the new city shortly before the birth of a child, often their first. Several of these have described the psychic discomfort of this situation; some have identified the hospital nurse as the first real agent of acculturation from the host society whom they encountered. Skill in the use of English and some arithmetic knowledge also facilitated for women the role of helping the man of the family if retail grocery trade was the economic activity. Further,

the experience in the boarding schools gave mothers a more sophisticated notion of the subjects and work requirements of their children's school setting than would otherwise be the case. One might hypothesize that this eased the culture conflict and sense of marginality of the second generation in Protestant homes. The hygiene and medical knowledge acquired by those women who had been to boarding school, and to an even greater extent for those with nurse's training, had clear practical utility as well as expressing the western value of emphasis on science and knowledge.

For the first generation there is also a difference in the degree to which immigrants of the different denominations utilized the assimilation avenues of voluntary associations of a community-wide nature, such as the Masonic orders and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. With success in business, access to civic clubs, such as the Lions or the Civitans, formed a setting for interaction with members of the dominant group. While the evidence available is less than perfect, there are clear impressions that some Protestants, at least, participated in these organizations with considerable skill, climbing the ranks to high achievement and recognition. Catholics generally confined themselves to ethnic or religious organizations. Some Protestant wives joined sister organizations and excelled. Though these are formal, secondary structures, they are a setting in which

primary group bonds may develop and they are clearly milieux for learning subtle cues and responses about many phases of the host society's thought and behavior patterns.

One datum further reflects the process being described: one of the first generation wives was the daughter of an original Protestant convert in Syria. Married to one of the leaders of the Protestant group, she was the honoree of the Mothers' Committee of her state for the Mother of the Year award. This would seem to reflect successful acculturation and assimilation. One assumes the committee in question, mainly Anglo-American in membership, would be looking for candidates who represent their own ideals.

SECOND GENERATION AND ASSIMILATION

The tabulation and testing of data related to the second generation generally produced findings in the direction suggested by the nine hypotheses.

First, with respect to educational attainment, the completion of high school was typical of all. It was hypothesized that Protestant second generation members would more typically complete college and/or professional school than would Catholics. This was, in fact, the case.

The hypothesis (I) that among the American-born offspring of the subject Syrian immigrant group, a significantly higher proportion of Protestants will have completed college and/or professional training than Catholics was supported

as a significance level of .001. When further analysis based on sex was made the same general pattern appeared. When the breakdown by sex was analyzed, the differences for Protestant and Catholic males was significant at the .02 level (support for Hypothesis II) while the difference for Protestant and Catholic females was significant at the .0001 level (support for Hypothesis III). This seems clear indication that Protestant families in this generation were more inclined than Catholics toward higher education in general, but dramatically so with respect to female progeny. In light of the above remarks on equality, autonomy, and the acceptance of the American emphasis on education as an aspect of acculturation, these findings have real meaning. Null hypotheses based on chance have been rejected; Hypotheses I, II, and III have been supported.

For patterns of intermarriage in the second generation the same general pattern was predicted; that is, a significantly higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics were predicted to marry outside the ethnic group. In fact, this pattern did occur. For the group as a whole a significantly higher proportion of Protestant second generation members married outside the ethnic group than did Catholics, the overall difference being significant at the .01 level. This lends support to Hypothesis IV and is a basis for rejecting the null hypothesis. When the breakdown by sex is analyzed,

however, a sharp contrast appears. The proportion of Protestant males marrying outside the group was different from the proportion of Catholics only at the .09 level of significance. This raises some question as to the support for Hypothesis V. For the second generation females, however, the data present a dramatically different picture. The proportion of Protestant females marrying outside the group was greater than that of Catholics at the .0005 level of significance. For Hypothesis V, the null hypothesis cannot be entirely rejected. For Hypothesis VI, by contrast, the null hypothesis is rejected and the predicted pattern is clearly supported.

With respect to the patterns of mobility out of the home community the findings represent interesting surprises. Overall, the expected pattern of second generation Protestants engaging in mobility out of the city in a higher proportion than Catholics was supported at a significance level of .0005. This would appear to lend strong support to Hypothesis VII. Further analysis related to male and female patterns demonstrated, however, that this effect resulted from extreme differences in the proportions of Protestant and Catholic females moving out, while no significant difference in the proportion of Protestant and Catholic males was found. For the second generation males the difference of proportions test produced variation significant only at the .56 level. The null hypothesis cannot be rejected. For females the difference of proportion of

Protestants as compared with Catholics is significant at the .0001 level. The null hypothesis is rejected and Hypothesis IX is supported.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions about acculturation and assimilation patterns in the second generation of this group have generally been in the predicted direction, with some surprises and ambiguities emerging. There have been rather unexpectedly pronounced differences between Protestant and Catholic females and less difference than anticipated in the male category. Both Protestant and Catholic males have pursued higher education beyond high school, the Protestant proportion being somewhat greater. There was relatively little significant difference in intermarriage patterns for Protestant and Catholic males. There was no significant difference in proportions of Catholic and Protestant males leaving the city.

For females, on the other hand, the differences between Protestant and Catholic proportions are pronounced on all three variables. In pursuit of higher education, intermarriage, and mobility out of the city Protestant women have shown differences in proportions from Catholics at extremely high levels of significance. These have been taken as evidence of greater acculturation and assimilation of Protestant second generation women as compared with their Catholic counterparts.

Perhaps the clearest conclusion would be that the missionary contact brought skills that were useful to all immigrants who were able to partake of the schooling and interaction they offered, whether or not conversion took place; but for females whose parents became Protestant and migrated, the missionary movement was a source of emancipation from subordinate status and unequal treatment as compared with male siblings. One conclusion clearly to be drawn from these findings is that women, given a rationale and an opportunity, will move rapidly into more emancipated modes of behavior, despite ancient traditions of subordination.

TABLE 1: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - OVERALL

	Completed only High School	Completed College and/or Prof Trng	Total
Catholic	28	16	44
Protestant	5	30	35
Total	33	46	79

Difference of Proportions Test $z = 4.41295$ $p < .001$

TABLE 2: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - MALES

	Completed only High School	Completed College and/or Prof Trng	Total
Catholic	10	14	24
Protestant	2	14	16
Total	12	28	40

Difference of Proportions Test $z = 1.972$ $p < .024$

TABLE 3: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - FEMALES

	Completed only High School	Completed College and/or Prof Trng	Total
Catholic	18	2	20
Protestant	3	16	19
Total	21	18	39

Difference of Proportions Test $z = 4.65$ $p < .0001$

TABLE 4: INTERMARRIAGE PATTERNS - OVERALL

	Marriage Within Ethnic Community	Marriage Outside Ethnic Community	Total
Catholic	17	20	37
Protestant	3	27	30
Total	20	47	67

Difference of Proportions Test $z = 3.194$ $p < .01$

TABLE 5: INTERMARRIAGE PATTERNS - MALE

	Marriage Within Ethnic Community	Marriage Outside Ethnic Community	Total
Catholic	7	15	22
Protestant	2	13	15
Total	9	28	37

Difference of Proportions Test $z = 1.29$ $p < .0985$

TABLE 6: INTERMARRIAGE PATTERNS - FEMALE

	Marriage Within Ethnic Community	Marriage Outside Ethnic Community	Total
Catholic	10	5	15
Protestant	1	14	15
Total	11	19	30

Difference of Proportions Test $z = 3.29$ $p < .0005$

TABLE 7: MOBILITY PATTERNS - OVERALL

	Remained in city	Left city	Total
Catholic	35	9	44
Protestant	15	20	35
Total	50	29	79

Difference of Proportions Test $z = 3.36$ $p < .0005$

TABLE 8: MOBILITY PATTERNS - MALE

	Remained in city	Left city	Total
Catholic	17	7	24
Protestant	11	5	16
Total	28	12	40

Difference of Proportions Test $z = .1406$ $p < .56$ n.s.

TABLE 9: MOBILITY PATTERNS - FEMALE

	Remained in city	Left city	Total
Catholic	18	2	20
Protestant	4	15	19
Total	22	17	39

Difference of Proportions Test $z = 4.34$ $p < .0001$

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